



Wounded Spirits, Ailing Hearts 4 Interviews Written Video Transcript

It was a shock. After I got to boot camp it seemed like everything that I had learned growing up was just reversed and it was hard to accept. [00:00.20.00]

Racism dogged them. And whether bigotry came from prejudice or ignorance its effects were still painful.

The officers and people over there just they give you all kinds of names.

Like what?

Like (Indian blankets), chiefs. Always I hate that word, chiefs. [00:00.40.00]

Indian soldiers were often mistaken for the Vietnamese because of the color of their skin, their features and stature, even by their own troops.

You know, time I went into the military I didn't know, I didn't know nothing about being prejudiced or anything like that, [00:01.00.00] you know. When I went to boot camp first thing, first thing you start throwing at me, started calling me fucking Indian and blanket ass, squaw man. I didn't know what the hell that meant, you know. I went to school with Blacks, [00:01.20.00] Chicanos and whites, you know, all I saw was a human being. I didn't see no color.

And Native Americans in Vietnam wrestled with troubling philosophical issues. They carried the memory of their own subjugation by colonizing forces. The U.S. mission there echoed their own personal histories. [00:01.40.00] Native veterans, families and community members live a collective memory of traumatic events that still haunt most Indian people today. The names and places are infamous. Wounded Knee, The Long Walk, The Trail of Tears, The Sandcreek Massacre. [00:02.00.00] These and other similar atrocities by the U.S. government resonate today in Native American communities across our country and among Native veterans. Still, the most troubling aspect of American Indian and Alaskan Native service in Vietnam involved an intrinsic conflict between their duty to the U.S. military [00:02.20.00] and their views of themselves as warriors. The two frequently clashed in ways that threatened to undermine a central principle governing the lives of adult males in Native communities.

I guess I just got real tired of doing the PTSD shuffle and [00:02.40.00] hiding and harboring these feelings of guilt and shame and anger and all these other things. And how could I have these things and be a Lakota warrior? Things just did not [00:03.00.00]



add up. Is this the way it's supposed to be for me? Is this the part of what the responsibility entails, you know? And what it amounted to was confusion.

Well, you're supposed to be brave and all that, you know. And [00:03.20.00] not to be afraid of anything, you know. And here I'm afraid all the time, you know. And I can't—I'm always afraid of things and those things have been happen, you know, and I'm not supposed to think like that. [00:03.40.00] Here I am, here I am like that, you know. And that makes me think that I'm, you know, thinking of myself as less than a—short of being a traditional man, I'll say. You know. Because my dad was very traditional and my grandfathers [00:04.00.00] were very traditional. And I try to follow in their footsteps.

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